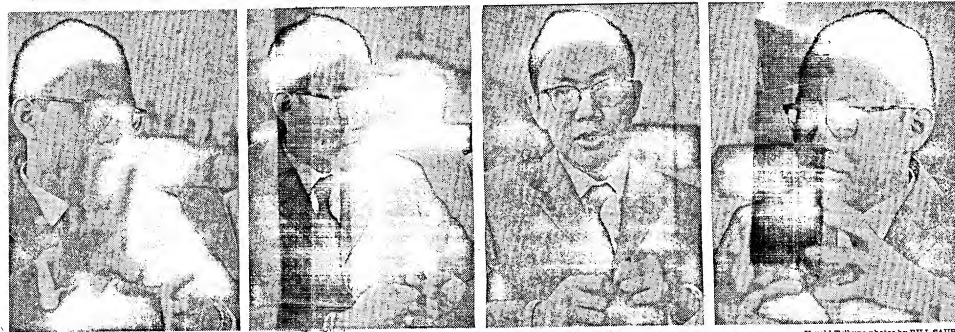


Bottom of the Pyramid—Red China Defector



Tung Chi-ping, defector from Red China, tells his story in Chinese, French, and hands.

Herald Tribune photo by BILL SAURO

By Stuart L. Loory
of the New York Tribune

more important than the book about the exploits of a Communist here and wearing a dark jacket and a light-colored shirt.

He stood there not even thinking of what might come next. He thought only of what he was escaping. The sight of those useless piles of iron in the Shanghai school yard raced through his mind.

And then, in a rush, came the words:

"Je vous demande l'asile politique aux Etats Unis."

Tung Chi-ping will be well treated in this country. He wants to learn English. That will be taught to him. Then he wants to work at fighting communism. He will probably be given that opportunity. When another stone breaks loose from the pyramid, this country wants potential Chinese defectors to know it will be treated with all the care a sculptor reserves for a prized block of marble.

Tomorrow: The education—and disillusionment—of Tung Chi-ping.

TUNG CHI-PING is a 21-year-old Chinese civil servant, the highest ranking official from Peking ever to defect to the West—and just one rung off the bottom of the 25-step service pyramid. He walked out on communism when he took a taxi to the American Embassy in Burundi, not knowing what would happen to him or where he would go next. That was two months ago. Last week, he arrived at Kennedy International Airport and, in a long, exclusive interview, he talked about his life and his defection. He wore a gray business suit; his shoes were probably bought during a stopover in Rome; his black hair was short; his face was serious—but he seemed to be enjoying himself. Once he was part of the vast bureaucracy that keeps together the largest country in the world. Now, seeing Americans as strangers but friendly ones, he told his story of a closed society and how he managed to escape it.

matte relations with the Kingdom of Burundi, a Belgian trusteeship territory since 1919 in which French was a main language.

As cultural attache in the French embassy, the Foreign Office had assigned 34-year-old Shen Chun, a trusted party servant who had one drawback—he spoke no French.

Mr. Tung was the last French-speaking male in the Cultural Commission who had not been posted abroad. As a non-party or non-Communist Youth League member, his loyalty was suspect.

Still, the party had no choice. He understood French and a language that could speak for him.

The appointment abroad entitled him to a two-week vacation. He returned to Shanghai to say good-by to his family and one day he found himself standing in the schoolyard of his old high school examining the useless hulks of iron discarded from the 1968 backyard furnace campaign.

"Why haven't you taken them away?" he asked a workman.

"Because to clean it up would cost money and the regime has no money for it," the workman replied. Mr. Tung now sees the discarded iron as symbols of the Communist government's bankruptcy.

Returning to Peking, Mr. Tung took an 800 JMP clothing allowance (which he says is about \$400) from the Foreign Office and went out to buy clothes for the trip abroad.

He purchased two suits, an overcoat, two pairs of shoes, some shirts, underwear and other necessary articles and a suitcase in which to stow them. He carefully pocketed five pounds sterling (\$14) given him for emergencies and on May 19, he left with Shen Chun.

The first leg of the flight went from Peking to Canton via the Red Chinese airline. In Canton they boarded an Air Pakistan flight that took them first to Dacca in East Pakistan and then to Karachi for a two-day layover.

Now the defection plan was formulated. "We always slept in the same room and I began to worry that I would do something in my sleep that would betray me."

He thought of pulling aside the bamboo curtain in Karachi but two days before the flight. "Pakistan is an English speaking country and I did not speak English," he said. "Also my ticket was made out to Bujumbura and I wanted to go as far as I could, to see as much as I could."

(This remark brought one of the few smiles to the defector's face during the hour and 40 minute interview. He is a slim, somber youth who talks softly and makes his emphases with long, graceful fingers.)

VERY EXCITED

From Karachi, the flight continued to Aden and then Nairobi. Mr. Tung thought more and more about a plan. He talked less and less with his superior.

"We talked about the weather, about how fast the plane went. I didn't want to talk too much."

Shen Chun, short, balding, looking older than he was, apparently suspected nothing.

From Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, they flew to Kampala, a neighboring city of Uganda, a neighbor of Burundi. In Kampala, they were told by a Chinese diplomat that cable service was so bad they could not message ahead to advise the Bujumbura mission of their arrival.

"They gave me the address of the embassy and the room number and told me I should call them from the airport and have them send a car to pick us up," Mr. Tung related.

On that last leg, he formulated this plan: Rather than calling the embassy when he landed, he would take advantage of Mr. Shen's ignorance. He would ask a taxi and, in French, ask to be taken to the American Embassy. Once there, he would tell Mr. Shen he was defecting and invite him to defect also.

It was Monday, May 25, when Mr. Tung and Mr. Shen arrived in Bujumbura. They went with the Chinese charge to the temporary embassy headquarters in the Paquidas Hotel. Mr. Shen immediately took a bath to freshen up. Mr. Tung strolled out to the veranda and struck up a conversation with three African youths, apparently streeturchins. They wanted candy. He had none. They wanted cigarettes. He did not smoke. They wanted money. He had only five pounds and was not about to surrender it.

But he asked them to return on Wednesday. Then he would give them candy and cigarettes, he said. He planned to use them to lead him to the American Embassy.

He dressed casually in the shirt with no tie, trousers and slippers. He took the book about the hero. If questioned, he thought he could safely say he was going into the street to walk and read.

He took the elevator to the lobby. The door opened, and there he saw Mr. Shen and the chauffeur for the Em-